United Nations A/53/PV.55

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

55th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 10 November 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mungra (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 31 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

Note by the Secretary-General, transmitting the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (A/53/370 and Add.1 and 2)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.25)

Ms. Shahani (Philippines): In the past the Philippine delegation has strongly supported the culture of peace programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and it will continue to do so. Having itself experienced the tragic consequences of armed conflict both at the national and international levels, the Philippines is strongly committed to peace. Within the context of its national culture of peace programme, the Philippines sponsored the second International Forum on the Culture of Peace in Manila in 1995 in cooperation with UNESCO.

In 1996, the Philippine Government signed the peace Agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), thereby ending decades of bitter domestic conflict. In recognition of their role in bringing about peace in the southern Philippines, former President Fidel V. Ramos and Nur Misuari, the leader of the MNLF and Governor of the autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao, were awarded jointly the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize in June 1998. In March of this year, the UNESCO "Cities for Peace" prize was also awarded to the mayor of one of the major cities of the Philippines. We therefore fully welcome the initiative of the United Nations to develop a culture of peace.

In this connection, may I also inform this body that the Philippines participated actively in the 1998 Stockholm Conference on Cultural Policies for Development. We would to commend former Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and his team for the work they did in putting out the great report entitled "Our Creative Diversity" as the final report of the World Commission on Culture and Development.

We thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, for their collaboration in preparing the report before us, particularly the draft declaration and draft programme of action on a culture of peace. On the whole, we can say that the Philippines is satisfied with the draft texts before us, but we would like to see the strengthening of certain points, such as the emphasis on the transformation of the individual and of his or her lifestyle, which would be conducive to the creation of a peaceful yet creative life.

98-86362 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

We agree that the challenge of promoting a culture of peace should be placed at the centre of the United Nations agenda for the year 2000. We share the view that the principal task of the United Nations at the beginning of the next millennium is to link the various peace efforts throughout the world and promote a global movement for peace. We know that consensus-building, norm-setting, mediation and arbitration are the strengths of the United Nations system. This clearly demonstrates, after many years, that the Member States of the United Nations share a common vision and have already begun putting in place the building blocks for a culture of peace.

While it is essential that the United Nations and the Member States cooperate with civil society in this undertaking, in our view Governments must take a leading role in this regard. We therefore support the establishment of strategies for national action by Member States. However, my delegation would also like to stress forcefully during this debate the role of non-governmental organizations and of individuals themselves, for it is they who will provide the inspiration, the credibility and the purity of intention for such a noble undertaking as the creation of a culture of peace. For at the heart of such movements, it is the lives of great individuals, both known and unknown, who provide the direction, the spark of inspiration. Think of the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Gautama Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed.

The bottom line in achieving the culture of peace is for individuals themselves to become non-violent. We suggest, therefore, educational programmes on values formation, values education and values inculcation. As the non-violent revolution of 1986 in the Philippines showed, it was the common people, individuals themselves rather than institutions, who chose the path of non-violence. Let us make no mistake: those who live by the sword will die by the sword. Non-violence, peace and harmony must begin with us. It would be a major mistake, in the view of our delegation, if we looked at the culture of peace as an intellectual, technical or even diplomatic exercise. It is an individual, spiritual undertaking. We would commend or endorse the values of meditation, silence, detachment and moral discipline. All of this must be practised by all of us in our daily lives if we are to live and breathe in a culture of peace in the coming century.

With regard to the preparation for the International Year for the Culture of Peace, a draft executive order is now awaiting the signature of our head of State, President Joseph Estrada, to create a national committee for the culture of peace. This committee will prepare the national plan of action and a programme of activities for the year. Our President himself gives high priority to the issue of law and order. This proposed national committee will have an intersectoral character and approach, with a membership coming from Government and non-governmental organizations. It will include women and men as important focal points for the culture of peace programme, and it will ensure the involvement of the media in its activities.

In the past, the United Nations looked at peace as merely the absence of war or conflict. But as we approach the millennium, peace should be seen in a more positive light, not only as the absence of conflict, but as the flowering of the human spirit, the prerequisite for economic prosperity and social solidarity. But peace, as I have said, must mean individual transformation, it cannot be just a legal or an intellectual exercise. I hope that as we approach the twenty-first century, we will realize that we cannot have a peaceful world unless we ourselves are peaceful human beings.

The twentieth century has been a century of violence, war and conflict. Let us hope that the twenty-first century will be one of peace, harmony and moderation, where the human spirit can flower in all its glory, nobility and purity. The Philippine delegation is very willing to cooperate in any way it can to promote the item before us.

Mr. Dos Santos (Mozambique): Allow me to thank you, Sir, for giving us this opportunity to make our humble contribution to the discussion of this item on the culture of peace.

The importance that the people of Mozambique attach to the principle of peace and non-violence is based upon our long experience of about 30 years of successive wars and violence, from the liberation struggle against colonialism to destabilization.

This dark page of the country's history resulted in loss of life for many Mozambicans and non-citizens, the destruction of the economic and social infrastructure, the disruption of the social fabric and the creation of groups of poorest among the poor, consisting of displaced persons and refugees, most of whom were women, children or elderly.

The Rome Peace Agreement of 1992 resulted from the genuine willingness of the people of Mozambique to put an end to this cycle of wars and violence. It paved

the way for the launching of collective efforts towards ensuring the restoration of durable peace in the country.

The Mozambicans decided to bury the hatred deeply sown in their hearts and heal the wounds of war by initiating an era of continuous dialogue in an environment of tolerance, unity in diversity and respect for individual freedoms and the rule of law. This choice was hard and painful, but its success in laying the foundations for the country's lasting peace and sustainable development cannot be denied.

The democratic elections held in October 1994, with the participation of all political segments in the country, was the reaffirmation of the desire of all Mozambicans to consolidate peace and stability and embrace the new political and judicial framework enshrined in the 1990 Constitution, thus laying the foundations for a democratic society based on the universal principles of freedom and equality.

The programme of the elected Government represents a clear indication of our aspirations, and hence includes among its highest priorities the revitalization of democratic institutions, the promotion of respect for human rights, the provision of education and health services for the population and the creation of basic conditions for relaunching the development of an economy seriously devastated by the war. We believe that the cornerstone of the successes we have so far achieved has been the promotion of the principles of forgiveness, tolerance and reconciliation, which we consider to be the essence of a culture of peace.

The success in strengthening peace in Mozambique places on us a responsibility to contribute actively to the same end in other places, as long as conflicts or potential conflicts persist in Africa, the most affected continent, or elsewhere in the world. In keeping with that principle, Mozambique has actively participated in several international initiatives organized by, *inter alia*, the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization of African Unity, the Southern African Development Community, other regional organizations and individual States, in a search for lasting solutions to conflicts still ravaging many parts of the world.

In September 1997, the Government of Mozambique, in collaboration with UNESCO, convened in Maputo the International Conference on Culture of Peace and Governance. The Conference, in which more than 300 delegates participated, was a singular opportunity for Mozambicans of different tendencies to exchange point of views with participants from various countries on the issue of the culture of peace.

Having read the Secretary-General's consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace, we would like to commend its submission in response to General Assembly resolution 52/13.

I would like to seize this opportunity to express our firm belief that the draft declaration and programme of action offer an excellent framework for the active involvement of all actors at national, regional and international levels in various areas of the culture of peace, including conflict resolution and prevention, human rights, consolidation of democracy, elimination of poverty and development.

The maintenance of international peace and security is the major responsibility not only of the United Nations but of all peace-loving nations, institutions and individuals. Hence, we also share the idea that the culture of peace should become a priority for the entire United Nations system, making a valuable contribution to eliminating the root causes of conflicts in the world and introducing a culture of peace worldwide.

In this regard, we welcome the proclamation by the General Assembly of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace. This would be a clear indication of the renewed commitment of the United Nations to mobilizing all international actors to work together for a better world free from the scourge of war that today affects many parts of the world, and Africa in particular.

Likewise, we support the proclamation of the period 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. This would be a positive beginning of a new millennium dedicated to joining efforts to bring about peace, harmony, human rights, democracy and development in all corners of the world.

The causes of conflicts are intrinsically linked to poverty and development, especially in the developing world and in Africa in particular, where most of them occur, as was recognized in the recent report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict in Africa. Therefore, we reaffirm that all actions aimed at achieving

and consolidating peace must be accompanied by concrete measures addressing the fundamental causes of conflicts.

If we do not address seriously the problems of abject poverty, hunger, illiteracy, and disease, which affect one fifth of the world's population, international peace and security will always be in jeopardy. We need to promote investment and economic growth, ensuring adequate levels of international aid, a reduction of the debt burden and the opening of international markets to the developing world.

The culture of peace will not take root and cannot produce the results to which we all aspire unless Governments, political actors and social actors in general undertake more vigorous action aimed at promoting human development, particularly in the fields of education, health and housing. On the other hand, communities and nations must also demonstrate their genuine willingness to embark on an open and constant dialogue and to embrace tolerance and reconciliation as a means of solving their problems, and must abandon the culture of violence, hatred and revenge.

Peace is not merely the absence of war. It goes beyond that, demanding a continuous spirit of tolerance, reconciliation and enduring commitment to sharing a country's assets, transcending particular and localized interests. Tolerance and reconciliation should be a matter of concern not only among politicians and political elites, but also and above all among families, communities and society in general. A culture of peace must be born out of all citizens as a unitary value, encompassing the ideas of peace and non-violence disseminated and transformed into an intrinsic part of the collective conscience of people.

There is general consensus on what a culture of peace should entail. We need to deepen our collective understanding of the concept. We see the concept of the culture of peace as a set of values, attitudes and behaviours, ways of living and acting, based on respect for life, the dignity and rights of the human person, rejection of violence, including all forms of terrorism, and commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding among all peoples and groups in society and among individuals.

The culture of peace is based on universally accepted fundamental principles of human coexistence, full participation of all citizens and transparency in decision-making and in the management of public affairs. It derives from a constant search for consensus, values of unity and harmony and peaceful settlement of differences. In this regard, diversity is seen as a cultural asset, a positive factor to value and promote.

The Government of Mozambique envisages the introduction of a culture of peace in teaching institutions. This approach is based on the assumption that education for peace has particular importance in conflict prevention, since it is first and last in the minds of men and women that ideas likely to manifest themselves in violence can be found. We believe that such concrete measures will allow us to move from rhetoric to action. Promoting a culture of peace today will be a valuable heritage we can bestow on future generations. That will be a major contribution towards preparing ourselves to face the challenges of the next millennium.

Mozambique reaffirms its commitment to a culture of peace, and will continue to lend its modest contribution towards that noble goal.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly considered the question of a culture of peace. A large number of States, including my own, made statements setting out their understanding of the concept of a culture of peace and offered important views on how to develop this initiative. Today again we are discussing the effects of culture on mankind's efforts to create a world based on equality among States, and on the right of States to sovereignty and freedom.

Culture is the sum total of the historical heritage of peoples. It is their conscience, their logic and their way of thinking. Peace is mankind's pursuit of a noble objective; in brief it means giving the world's peoples every opportunity collectively and individually to achieve full growth and development free from conflicts, hegemony, exploitation and occupation.

Hence, we view the formation of a culture of peace as meaning the education of mankind in the purposes and principles of the Charter and in the principles of international law and of humanitarian law. These concepts leave no room for interference in the internal affairs of States, absolutely reject foreign occupation, uphold justice and equality in international relations, and recognize the right of peoples to self-determination.

Peace and a culture of peace as we understand these concepts mean far more than the mere absence of war. There can be no peace with continued occupation, settler colonialism and the displacement of the sons and

daughters of the occupied territories. Peace also implies a commitment to renouncing the use, threat of use or development of nuclear weapons. A culture of peace cannot be neutral in the face of the catastrophes of foreign occupation, hunger, poverty, displacement and repression, because these scourges pose a threat to the international community and sow tension and chaos in international relations. The world needs to be further educated in peace, based on the renunciation of occupation, aggression and settler colonialism, and on the call for cooperation, solidarity and mutual support, in order to close the rapidly growing and deepening chasm between the society of power and wealth and the society of abject poverty, suffering and death.

Human history has witnessed social and political phenomena spawned in an environment of evil, such as racist repression and the craving to continue foreign occupation, aggression, injustice and repression. How can we talk logically, intellectually and philosophically of a culture of peace in a world that has not yet eliminated foreign occupation, a world in which the poor are growing in numbers and in poverty, a world in which some 400 individuals possess funds that exceed the combined annual incomes of countries with a total population of 2.5 billion — 45 per cent of the world's people — not to mention the hundreds of millions of people who are hungry or the more than 200 million children suffering from malnutrition for a variety of reasons?

By definition, a culture of peace is inimical to a culture of war. A culture of peace cannot stand silent in the face of the challenges confronting society. I affirm that it would be a serious mistake to consider the question of a culture of peace as though today's world were free of war and of its underlying causes. Human history has recorded the withering of many cultures and noble ideas because they lacked a champion when they were assailed by the enemies of peace.

In this connection, the Arabs — who have made peace an integral part of their culture, their heritage and their daily conduct and an intrinsic element of their lives and customs — view it as entirely natural that the United Nations and its agencies should vigorously address and promote the noble values of a just peace, an honourable peace, a dignified peace. It was in that vein that the Arabs accepted the United Nations concept for the attainment of peace in the Middle East region while the Israeli side continues to reject United Nations resolutions relating to the attainment of peace on the basis of the principle of land for peace. Israel also refuses to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Moreover, the present Israeli Government is sparing no effort to sow the seeds of a new war of aggression, whose hallmarks are Israel's acquisition of devastating nuclear weapons and its shirking of commitments and undertakings agreed upon during the peace talks.

A culture of peace is a legitimate aspiration for the future and, as stressed in more than one place in the report contained in document A/53/370 and its addenda, an endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes. It is not a question of controlling peoples or of preventing them from attaining their aspiration to liberate their lands and eliminate the injustices that have throughout history been inflicted upon them in unfair and oppressive circumstances.

If the essence of the culture of peace is intervention to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict, then it is incumbent on the international community to discourage the current Israeli Government from pursuing its policies that run counter to the culture of peace and to prevail upon it through various means to refrain from its colonialist settlement policies and withdraw from occupied Arab territories in Syrian Golan and Palestine and revert to the lines which existed on 4 June 1967. It should also withdraw from southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa without conditions and recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

We also feel that the right of peoples to defend their land, independence and sovereignty should be an integral part of the culture of peace and that peoples and States of the world should continue to support such struggles. Experience has shown that policies which violate the rights and the sovereignty of peoples provide fertile grounds for continued violence and bloodshed.

We view the plurality of cultures in the world as a positive element which enriches the culture of peace; that culture of peace must reflect the sum total of these cultures. We are pleased to see that the draft declaration and programme of action before us include repeated references to this.

We at the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations have studied the comprehensive report submitted by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and which includes the draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace. We view with satisfaction the statements in that

report which indicate the need to strengthen understanding among cultures. We are also pleased by UNESCO's publication of books on the histories of mankind, and Africa, the cultures of Central Asia, and the contribution made by the Arab civilization toward the cultures of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as books on the various aspects of Islamic culture, the general history of Latin America, and the history of the Caribbean.

With regard to the draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace, the delegation of Syria views with satisfaction the references to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, UNESCO's Constitution and various other international instruments, as well as to promoting the equality in rights and opportunities for men and women. However, we feel that the failure to deal with foreign occupation, racism, xenophobia, racial discrimination and nuclear weapons and the threat they pose represents a departure from reality which necessitates dealing with aspects of the greatest threats to international peace and security. Unless these issues are dealt with, efforts to promote a culture of peace will remain a mere intellectual luxury. We would like to point out that the twelfth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement affirmed these elements that we also feel should be included in the draft declaration and programme of action before us.

Syria, whose people are heirs to a great age-old culture that dates back thousands of years and which gave man the first alphabet in history, looks forward now as ever to a world free from occupation and hegemony in which the principles of justice, equality and peace prevail.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first of all to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Mr. Federico Mayor, for the consolidated report they submitted, which contains the draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace.

As the report points out, there is currently a process under way to establish a culture of peace. The seriousness and breadth of that endeavour should receive its due place among United Nations priorities. The creation of the United Nations system, based on values commonly shared by all mankind, in itself became a major step forward towards a culture of peace. International action taken under the auspices of the Organization — especially that set out in the declaration and programme of action in the consolidated report — reflects the development and strengthening of general standards, values and goals which are the basis for the further development of the concept of a culture of peace.

As you know, UNESCO's primary task is to instill in the consciousness of peoples a firm foundation for the idea of peace. The organization calls upon mankind to fight against war, to eradicate violence and poverty and to respect democratic principles. In this connection, the provisions set forth in the declaration are especially appropriate today, when conflicts abound in various regions of the world. The declaration clearly reflects the basic tasks on the agenda for the third millennium, which must begin in a spirit of non-violence, mutual understanding, dialogue and tolerance — in other words, in a spirit of gradually moving away from the ideology of war and moving towards the basic values of a culture of peace.

Achieving the goals and strategies put forward in the programme of action on a culture of peace is first and foremost linked with the coordination and strengthening of mutual actions to preserve and develop stability and trust among nations. In this connection, it is very important that Member States develop their own national programmes of action, thereby adding to this programme. Here, the goal of education should be one of the basic tools in carrying out this important mission. As was pointed out in the report prepared for UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, the goal of education lies in learning to live together. Moreover, the report submitted to UNESCO by the World Commission on Culture and Development mentions that we can develop diverse peaceful methods of coexistence through culture.

UNESCO's basic principles in the areas of tolerance, human rights and democracy have been reflected in the main topic of the 155th session of its Executive Board: "The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a duty to remember and to be vigilant — from slavery to the full attainment of human dignity", and particularly in the documents adopted at the final meeting of the Board's 155th session, which was held on 6 November 1998 in Tashkent.

The decision on a culture of peace adopted in Tashkent, which is contained in A/53/370/Add.1, thanks the Director-General for having launched the culture of peace initiative and expresses satisfaction that the United Nations proclaimed the year 2000 as the International

Year for the Culture of Peace, as well as designating UNESCO as coordinator for the programme of action.

As the representative of Uzbekistan, it is a pleasure for me to point out that my country was elected a member of the Executive Board last year at the twenty-ninth session of UNESCO's General Conference. We will participate very actively in its work.

In keeping with UNESCO's fundamental goal, as enshrined in its Constitution — to instil the idea of the defence of peace — the process of the culture of peace presupposes that culture, spirituality and education can save the world from darkness and vandalism, religious and national extremism, ethnic confrontation and regional conflicts.

As was noted at the Tashkent meeting of the Executive Board of UNESCO, this idea is today very relevant. Various parts of the world are seeing an increase in international and religious confrontation; many threats are becoming global in nature; and many areas are ravaged by armed conflicts — both old and new — that are based on religious, ethnic and international differences. In Afghanistan and in the Middle East, in the Balkans and in Africa, innocent people are dying. Historical artifacts are being consumed by the flames of conflict — artifacts that by law belong to the common cultural heritage of humankind.

Unfortunately, regional and local conflicts, religious extremism, terrorism, the drug trade and the illegal arms trade continue to threaten the stability of the world and security, not only in our region but throughout the world.

Mounting a defence against these threats is the goal of UNESCO, whose very creation was dictated by the United Nations need to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war through "the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind as a whole", as set out in the fifth preambular paragraph of UNESCO's Constitution.

In this connection, we welcome UNESCO's international "Bridge" programme, which has strengthened interaction with the countries of Central Asia. The goal is to study and analyse the political transformations that have taken place in the context of the quest to avert war and ethnic conflict.

Uzbekistan, which attaches great importance to the revival of ethnicity and the development of national culture, feels that renewed national awareness cannot be divorced from the ideals of a global culture and shared human values. The history and culture of the Uzbek nation is an integral and inalienable part of human civilization. The people of Uzbekistan have been able to preserve their historical and cultural values and ethnic traditions, which have been carefully handed on from generation to generation.

Now that independence has been attained, the names and noble deeds of great Uzbek historical figures have been given new prominence. These include Imam Al-Bukhari, Bahauddin Nakshbandi, Khwaja Ahmed Yassavi, Mohammed Al-Khoresmi, Al-Biruni, Ibn Sino, Ulugbek and many others, who have made a tremendous contribution not only to the development of our multinational culture but also to world civilization.

We sincerely thank the leadership of UNESCO for its support, which has helped to preserve our cultural heritage and bring to light our nation's true history. An example of this support was the week-long programme dedicated to the development of science, culture and education at the time of the Timurid Dynasty. Held in Paris in 1996, the event was devoted to the 660th anniversary of the birth of Timur, that great son of the Uzbek nation, and was a major milestone in the history of the cooperation between Uzbekistan and UNESCO.

As a result of the UNESCO "Project on an Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue", an international institute devoted to Central Asian research was set up in Samarkand. Its goal is to study the civilization of Central Asia in order to educate the world about the great history of the peoples of that region and about eastern civilization, which remains largely unexplored. It aims also to leave to our descendants a clear picture of all of the historic changes taking place today in the Central Asian countries that are pursuing renewal and progress.

For 1,000 years very diverse religions, cultures and lifestyles coexisted in Uzbekistan. Our experience of peaceful coexistence among peoples of differing religious beliefs and creeds is testimony to the fact that this can be an element in the successful resolution of internal and regional conflicts that have international religious and ethnic foundations.

In its final provisions, the Tashkent Declaration calls upon Member States to adopt all the necessary measures to provide for the successful conducting of the International Year for the Culture of Peace, 2000, and

thus confirm the values of tolerance, mutual understanding and the fight against poverty, and marginalization. Uzbekistan welcomes and stresses the importance of the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council designating 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, and we are ready actively to participate in its implementation. We also believe that the question of the culture of peace should be one of the basic items on the agenda of the Assembly for the year 2000.

In conclusion, allow me once again to express the support of the Government of Uzbekistan for the draft declaration and programme of action for the culture of peace and to call for its speedy implementation by the General Assembly.

One of the obligations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations is the duty to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. This should be our motto, because we have such tremendous potential. But we need to use it on a timely basis. The broad participation of countries and nations throughout the world under the auspices of UNESCO in the realization of the ideas of the culture of peace and humanism will allow us to bring peoples together to make the world safer and more secure. This should be our sole "weapon" towards the establishment of peace and cooperation.

Mr. Yere (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Côte d'Ivoire is pleased to take the floor to express its gratification at the fact that the question of a culture of peace has been placed on our agenda as a separate item. My country was associated with the launching of the initiative that has resulted in today's General Assembly debate.

I should like also to congratulate the Secretary-General for the excellent report he has presented to us, which was drafted in close cooperation with the Director-General of UNESCO and which contains a draft declaration and programme of action for the culture of peace.

The concept of a culture of peace was born nearly four decades ago in Côte d'Ivoire. It emerged from the political philosophy of our first President, Mr. Félix Houphouët-Boigny. That idea was solemnly enshrined at the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, organized by UNESCO in July 1989 in Yamoussoukro, the political capital of Côte d'Ivoire.

Today we are inspired by a feeling of both pride and joy at seeing that this idea has come so far as to become a basic element of international relations.

During the relatively recent era of African decolonization, which was characterized both by struggles for liberation and fratricidal and inter-ethnic conflicts — at a time when it was hardly wise to speak out against the logic of violence and war prevailing on our continent — my country had the courage to suggest that dialogue should serve as a means of settling disputes and of building peace within each African nation, between nations and between continents.

"Peace is not a hollow word, it is a way of life", President Félix Houphouët-Boigny liked to say. Peace is not some weapon wielded by human beings. It is inherent in human nature. It is therefore necessary to preserve within human beings this value that they tend too often to set aside in favour of their instincts to make war or act violently. To do this we must, *inter alia*, focus on educating the young, on special training programmes for political actors and on a resolute policy of dialogue among the basic political institutions and with civil society. This is how we have understood the culture of peace, and this is how we apply it in Côte d'Ivoire.

My country welcomes the establishment by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1989 of the international Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize, mentioned this morning by the Ambassadors of Bangladesh and Senegal. This award is

> "intended to honour individuals, bodies or institutions that have made a significant contribution to promoting, seeking, safeguarding or maintaining peace".

The jury, which is chaired by Mr. Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State of the United States, has already given prizes to a number of internationally renowned individuals and groups, such as Presidents Nelson Mandela and Yasser Arafat, Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, the International Law Academy of The Hague, King Juan Carlos of Spain. Of the many other recipients, the President of Guatemala, Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, and Mr. Ricardo Ramírez de Léon, leader of the former opposition army, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, deserve special mention for their courage in putting an end to half a century of civil war in their country.

The elements of a culture of peace and the objectives of observing an International Year were already established last year by an Economic and Social Council resolution. To recall the main points of that resolution, the culture of peace is designed to promote, by means of education, science and communication, a particular type of behaviour, so as to replace the climate of war and violence with peaceful coexistence both within every nation and among nations.

Preparations for the commemoration of the International Year for the Culture of Peace have entered the final phase. The Assembly has before it a draft declaration and programme of action that UNESCO prepared in cooperation with all the other bodies of the United Nations system.

The Ivorian delegation hopes that these documents will find favour with the Member States since they are intended to provide the bases for the commemoration of the International Year. Similarly, my delegation would like to hope — in view of the importance of a culture of peace and of the hopes that are undeniably attached to such an idea — that this topic will be included as a central theme of the Millennium Assembly to be held in the year 2000.

Mr. Bala (Nigeria): As this is the first opportunity I have had to speak here since my head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, addressed the Assembly, I would like to congratulate Mr. Opertti on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. His election is a well-deserved honour, as his performance so far has clearly demonstrated his qualities. We really wish him a successful tenure.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address this session on this agenda item, which, though new on the United Nations agenda, is important and highly cherished by the people of Nigeria. The quest for peace and peaceful coexistence is as old as history itself. It is, indeed, at the centre of diplomacy The transition from confrontation to a culture of peace is a necessary prerequisite for any meaningful socio-economic growth and for the sustainable development of all societies, rich or poor, strong or weak, developed or developing. A culture of peace consists of a full range of values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social relationships based on the cherished principles of freedom, justice, democracy, human rights and tolerance.

Peace is not only the absence of conflict; it is a positive force that must be nurtured and sustained in order to promote development. It recognizes and tolerates differences, promotes dialogue and endeavours to transform all conflicts, through non-violent means, into shared understanding and cooperation.

Peace is an imperative in our time, not only because we now possess the wherewithal to destroy our planet several times over, but also because it is the right and rational thing to do. The quest for universal peace must remain our topmost priority. The arms race is anachronistic and debilitating. The peace dividend should become more evident as it is channelled to the alleviation of poverty worldwide, with a view to raising the living standards of the most disadvantaged. There can be no development in any society without peace, and without development societies cannot prosper for the common good and general well-being of peoples.

Peace is a basic fundamental human right that must be guaranteed to all without discrimination as to gender, race or religious belief. We wish to recall that in his Agenda for Development the former Secretary-General identified five basic elements of development, with peace as the foundation, the economy as the engine of progress, the environment as a basis for sustainability, justice as a pillar and democracy promoting the culture of tolerance, diversity and freedom of association.

My delegation welcomes the approach adopted in the note by the Secretary-General, which provides a conceptual framework that places due emphasis on the need to identify and address the deep roots of war and violence through education, as a necessary strategy to nurture the culture of peace. Its objectives include strengthening respect for cultural diversity and promoting tolerance, solidarity, cooperation and dialogue.

Unfortunately, instead of peace, the African continent has witnessed, over the past three decades, intractable conflicts and civil wars. These cause death and useless destruction of lives, property and already poor infrastructure. The human tragedy is even worse, as conflicts and wars create swarms of refugees and displaced persons. The recent report of the Secretary-General on "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" provides us with the latest statement on this deplorable state of affairs. We were, however, reassured that it is the primary aim of the United Nations to lead the way in the quest for peace, by providing the means through

which conflicts may be contained and resolved. Conflict prevention, both within and between States, must necessarily begin by eliminating the sources of tension through prompt action.

It is worth noting that in executing this mandate, the United Nations now brings regional organizations on board in a cooperative effort. The cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa is a shining example. It is our sincere hope and desire that the United Nations and the OAU will continue to work closely together in our collective efforts to bring lasting peace and sustainable development to our continent.

The success story of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the West African subregion — in Liberia and Sierra Leone — clearly demonstrates that where such regional initiatives exist they stand a greater chance of success if their peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts are adequately and promptly supported by the Security Council. ECOMOG represents a unique initiative by a subregional organization within the framework of regional arrangements for crisis management and conflict resolution.

I would like to request our Organization not to relent in its efforts to provide ECOMOG with the technical and logistical support that it requires to execute its ongoing mandate in Sierra Leone. We appreciate the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the United Nations office in Freetown and the Organization's involvement in the disarmament and demobilization activities of the combatants, as well as the deployment of military liaison and security advisory personnel to Freetown.

Furthermore, post-conflict peace-building must be given serious consideration and attention not only in Sierra Leone but also elsewhere in Africa where the populations have suffered untold hardship resulting from war and civil strife.

Nor can I fail to draw the attention of the Assembly to the increased cooperation between the United Nations and our subregional organization, ECOWAS and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). My Government will continue to encourage these positive experiences to promote a more rational and cost-effective synergy between these institutions, thereby bringing life to the provisions of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

In conclusion, the international community has a duty to create a global consensus and evolve the culture of peace in the minds of the world's people. With the growing interdependence among nations, it should focus on building bridges across nations and reaching out to other civilizations in fraternal and non-competitive dialogue to attain that universal civilization that is very dear to our African statesman and poet, Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, a member of the French Academy. The founding fathers of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization were right in observing that wars begin in the minds of men, and it is to the minds of men that we must return for solutions to the problems of war.

Finally, Nigeria is a convinced co-sponsor of the draft resolution before us, by which the Assembly, on the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council, would proclaim the period from 2001 to 2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. I am therefore delighted to support the draft declaration and programme of action and to commend this draft resolution, to the Assembly for adoption without a vote.

Mr. Jose (India): I am privileged to speak to the plenary of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on the "Consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace", under agenda item 31, "Culture of peace". We would like to thank the Secretary-General, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other bodies of the United Nations for building on the elements of the draft declaration and programme of action contained in last year's report with inputs from various quarters to produce the present draft declaration, programme of action and consolidated report.

My delegation made a number of substantive comments on both the draft declaration and the programme of action during the discussions in the plenary as well as at the meeting of the UNESCO Executive Board in Paris. We would briefly like to recapitulate the points that we made for the benefit of the General Assembly.

First, we made a number of suggestions regarding the format and rearrangement of ideas of the declaration and programme of action. In the declaratory part, we expressed the preference that the document be drafted in simple running prose rather than in the formal structure

of a preamble of articles. We also proposed a structure for the declaration which better brought out the idea of a culture of peace, its genesis, its meaning and significance, its goals and objectives, the means to be adopted to realize these goals and objectives, the responsibilities of the participating actors and its review and appraisal. We feel that structuring the declaration and programme of action around these headings would better bring out the project of a culture of peace. In particular, we expect that it would help the declaration avoid confusion between the goals and objectives of a culture of peace and the means to achieve them, which we found to be somewhat limited and limiting. Moreover, the richness of the information provided in the consolidated report could have also been better reflected in the draft declaration and programme of action.

Section A, called "Aims and strategies", in particular, is weak. The first point describes the objective of a culture of peace as one "which would contribute to the prevention of violent conflict". This is a partial and negative definition of the objective. The objective of a culture of peace is both more positive and comprehensive and is aimed at a much deeper level of human endeavour that corresponds to the term "culture".

Secondly, one of the objectives of the programme of action has been defined as linking activities for the building of a culture of peace with such priorities as human rights, democracy, development, equality of women, tolerance and free flow of information. In fact, if we see the culture of peace at the level of creating a culture — a new culture of peace — surely these activities would constitute means of realizing a culture of peace, and not merely activities separate from or linked to it. There is hardly anything in the declaration on the means to be adopted for realizing the goals and objectives of a culture of peace. There is only one paragraph where there is mention of means: article 6, which in part states that "Education is the principal means to build a culture of peace."

A full section in the declaration and programme of action on the means to be adopted to realize the goals and objectives of a culture of peace would substantially strengthen the document. Besides the elements already mentioned, it should include the importance of education in tolerance and the crucial role that can be played by symbols and institutions that promote tolerance, pluralism, coexistence, accommodation, respect for diversity and, at a cognitive level, in particular, respect for "the other". Not all behaviour is learned behaviour. There is a lot of behaviour which is inherited, and a lot more that emanates from a collective unconscious. There is also a need to consciously build the cognitive and unconscious dimensions that can contribute to a culture of peace.

The role that development, economic cooperation and economic interdependence can play in contributing to a culture of peace, in particular by creating a vested interest in peace and prosperity, and the way in which UNESCO can incorporate such philosophies in its transdisciplinary project, needs to be more fully explored.

Moreover, the suggestions for action are heavily tilted in favour of measures for peace-building and preventive diplomacy.

Thus, there is an attempt to link the entire idea of a culture of peace to Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter. There is repeated reference to mediation, reconciliation, consensus-building, confidence-building and so forth. All the points in paragraph 13 of the draft programme of action relate to such activities. Such activities are also mentioned in other paragraphs which are devoted to entirely different subjects.

For example, in paragraph 7 on actions to develop education, training and research for peace and non-violence, there is a reference to "special support for training in mediation and conflict resolution" and to

> "training which empowers people at all levels with the peacemaking skills of dialogue, mediation, conflict transformation [and] consensus-building".

These competences have less to do with a culture of peace and UNESCO than with diplomacy and the United Nations. Also, in paragraph 8 on human development, there is a reference to the "[i]ntegration of the dimension of conflict management into the development paradigm" and to "[d]evelopment assistance in post-conflict peace-building situations". Similarly, in paragraph 9 on actions to foster democratic participation, there is a reference to

> "[s]ystematic training and capacity-building in dispute resolution for public officials as an important component of development assistance".

In the same section, there is also a mention of "[r]esearch on experiences of national truth and conciliation commissions".

We are not suggesting that these elements should be altogether left out of the document, but that there should not be a lopsided emphasis on these elements. The thrust

of the other sections should not be diluted by bringing these elements into such sections as well.

This imbalance in the draft programme of action must be redressed for the following reasons. First, we are trying to put excessive emphasis on what is not directly within UNESCO's competence; secondly, this kind of emphasis on a culture of peace makes it a mechanical and quick-fix process, rather than an attitude of mind or a pattern of behaviour; and thirdly, it detracts from the impact of ideas which are in the nature of an attitude of mind and a pattern of behaviour.

There is an important omission from paragraph 6 on actions to promote respect for human rights. The human right to peace, which is still evolving, has been mentioned, but the rights of the child, particularly the right of the child to education, which have been accepted in the form of a legal instrument, are not mentioned.

Finally, the document leaves out some important positive ideas to which our delegation had made reference in plenary meeting on the subject of a culture of peace at UNESCO. These ideas, which are in the nature of the positive dimensions of peace, include the role of constructive pluralism; the search for common ethical values in different civilizations and spiritualities celebrating human brotherhood and unity; the concept of non-violence; measures to deal with poverty, deprivation and marginalization; measures to reduce inter-personal, inter-group and international inequalities with a view to eliminating them; disparities and asymmetries in the world order of money, finance, trade and security; the issue of governance; and so on. The role of symbols and institutions that nourish tolerance, pluralism and respect for "the other", particularly in heterogeneous populations, should also be explored and built upon.

As stated by UNESCO, the culture of peace aims at being a major step in a deep transformation of the cultural roots of war and violence into a culture of peace and non-violence. The draft declaration makes an important beginning in this direction and, notwithstanding the observations we have made in a spirit of constructive criticism, we would like to express our appreciation to all those who contributed to the subject. But, as we have laboured to argue, UNESCO can ill afford to neglect its core competence in the field of science, education, culture and ideas in the creation of a culture of peace in deference to the attractions of diplomacy.

In this context, we would like to signal our particular appreciation of the contribution of Nobel Peace laureates in introducing the idea of non-violence to the heart of the culture of peace through a detailed programme of education of children in non-violence, and to the delegation of Bangladesh for piloting the draft resolution on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence in the Economic and Social Council. It is our conviction that, properly targeted, a culture of peace can attack, if not eliminate, the roots of war in the human mind.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The United Nations was founded after the indescribable destruction and human suffering of the Second World War, which claimed millions of victims and dispersed hundreds of thousands of refugees. The United Nations embodied the hope of a final end to humanity's suffering.

Fifty years later, the United Nations has achieved great successes on many fronts and strives for more. It has not, however, lived up to the expectations and aspirations of many members of the international community. We are compelled to wonder why. We believe that the answer lies in the fact that the principal organs of the United Nations have remained, to a large extent, tools for trends in a specific culture and civilization whose representatives try to impose their values in all political, economic and social areas. In this context, my delegation understands and appreciates the importance of the concept of a culture of peace, which the General Assembly has been considering for two years.

The delegation of Sudan pays tribute to the enormous role played by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the promotion of a culture of peace. Ever since UNESCO convened the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men in Côte d'Ivoire in July 1989, we have followed that role and carried out various activities at all levels to consolidate the culture of peace.

At the national level, the Government of Sudan, a country that has been roiled by uprisings ever since it achieved independence, is fully aware of the political, social and economic effects of promoting the culture of peace. In this respect, my country has established close cooperation with UNESCO. In cooperation with UNESCO, we convened two symposiums in 1995 and 1996 to encourage the process of peace and national

dialogue in Sudan. Paragraph 38 of the report on this item (A/53/370) emphasizes this cooperation.

I wish briefly to describe the efforts being made by my country to restore peace. The peace process began with the convening of a conference on a peace dialogue a few months after the formation of the Government of National Salvation. A group of Sudanese leaders in the fields of politics and culture across the political and religious spectrums took part in the Conference to consider the strategy for achieving peace in our country. The conference indicated the need to hasten the establishment of peace through negotiations with the other parties. Consequently, the delegates departed from the conference heralding the arrival of peace, extending the olive branch and explaining to all neighbouring countries and to some other African and European States, all the steps taken by the Government of Sudan.

We began rounds of intensive dialogue in Frankfurt, Nairobi and Addis Ababa. These were followed by the well-known talks in Nigeria, known as Abuja I and Abuja II in 1992 and 1993 respectively, and then once again in Nairobi. Efforts made did not aim solely at those who bore arms abroad, for another movement was taking place internally in the country, namely, the campaign from within for peace by the people of Sudan. This movement aimed, first and foremost, at convincing the internal group of the necessity of peace and stability as a guarantee of peace for future generations and as a means to attain progress, development and reconstruction. Intensive programmes were implemented aimed at the people in the regions affected by war in southern Sudan and in southern Kordofan. These programmes emphasized awareness and the need to respect the culture of citizens and their religions. They also stressed that citizenship is the basis of equality in Sudan. This principle was later enshrined in the Sudanese Constitution adopted at the beginning of this year.

Consequently, these gigantic efforts bore fruit in the conclusion in April 1997 of the Khartoum Peace Accords, with seven factions from the main insurgency movement. These Accords had been preceded by the signing of a charter for peace in April 1996 in order to build trust between the parties. The leaders and the members of these factions came out of the forests and of the clutch of insurrection and during the course of a year were totally assured of the Government's serious intention to consolidate the culture of peace in Sudan. Then, on 21 April 1997, they voluntarily went to the Presidential Palace to sign the Accords which guarantee them all their rights and stress their duties.

The Khartoum Peace Accords stressed the following. Sudan is a multiracial, multicultural and multireligious country with freedom of religious belief and freedom to advocate religion. No one is to be persecuted on the basis of religious orientation. The Accords stressed respect for the dignity of the person, the independence of the judiciary, and the sharing of Sudan's wealth and power distribution within one State. These points were provided for in the Peace Accords. The adoption of all these principles and the application of all these steps were in essence the consolidation of the principles of the culture of peace in Sudan in word and deed. The statements of approbation by all the officials and the representatives of the United Nations who visited Sudan testify to this. Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), visited Khartoum and noted that the ideas which he always advocated were indeed being applied.

The communications revolution, which surpasses the concept of distance, offers an historic opportunity to promote the concept of a culture of peace as a replacement for the culture of domination and aggression. Indeed, the recent military aggression against the pharmaceutical and veterinary establishment in my country by the United States is the best testimony to the culture of war. It is now high time to eradicate that culture from the minds of men. In this lies the challenge to the United Nations to renew its commitment under its main mandate "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and to save them from all those preaching the culture of war.

In this respect, the delegation of Sudan wishes to pay tribute to the draft declaration on a culture of peace, which emphasizes, among other things, advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all peoples and thereby celebrating cultural diversity. The draft declaration also emphasizes that each nation is rich in its own traditions and values and has much to contribute and much to gain from the promotion of a culture of peace.

Ms. Topić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): It is an honour and privilege to address the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on the agenda item 31, entitled "Culture of peace".

The delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is very pleased that, in accordance with resolution 52/13, which my delegation had joined in sponsoring, the Secretary-General, in coordination with the Director-General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has submitted to the Assembly at the current session a consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace. Our delegation expresses its deep appreciation for this report, which is a result of the common efforts of Governments and the people of the world.

It was only three years ago that Bosnia and Herzegovina was in flames, a country where the policy of ethnic cleansing and the indiscriminate shelling of civilians were taking their toll in flagrant violation of the most basic of all human rights — the right to life. Today, slowly but steadily, peace is taking hold and the implementation of the peace plan is having a gradual, positive impact. This positive impact gives us strength and inspiration for further efforts and increases our hope for a peaceful, multi-ethnic, democratic, prosperous and united country.

Having such memories of our country's past, building a society which integrates tolerance, peace and love is our highest priority, since we know very well that only full respect for all human rights, including civil, political, cultural, economic and religious rights, leads towards the vision of the society of the new millennium — a society of tolerance and peace. Furthermore, we are witnessing the end of a century and of a millennium of great achievements, but at the same time a century and a millennium of two world wars and millions of innocent victims.

Therefore, my delegation strongly supports the recommendations in the consolidated report, hoping that such action-oriented vision will contribute to the global spread of a culture of peace, a world without violence and a world of democracy. We also support those goals to enable our participation in the efforts of the global community to build a more just society in order to spare the children and future generations from the fears of war — fears already inscribed in the childhood of the youngest in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our hopes are that those fears will be replaced with the awareness and comfort of a culture of peace.

In resolution 52/15 the General Assembly has declared the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace, and therefore we would like to propose the integration of the positive spirit of the culture of peace as an overarching theme of the Millennium Assembly.

Being pleased that the consolidated report reflects the activities relating to a culture of peace undertaken by the United Nations, in particular by UNESCO in various parts of the world, allow me to express my delegation's gratitude for UNESCO's tireless efforts in the reconstruction of a number of cultural and religious monuments in my country, including the bridge in Mostar.

For all these reasons, my delegation sincerely supports the adoption of programme of action on a culture of peace.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We are very honoured to note how the topic we had the privilege of introducing in 1995, at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, has evolved. Today we see an integrated plan perfectly consistent with resolution 52/13, adopted by consensus at the last session of the General Assembly. We believe the draft declaration on a culture of peace, its aims and strategies and the specific actions that can be taken at the national, regional and international levels are entirely consistent with what the General Assembly has called for. We also believe that the draft declaration is quite relevant.

The post-cold-war period has presented many challenges — with the unexpected emergence of various kinds of internal conflicts, ethnic issues, nationalist conflicts and xenophobic reactions — that have often stretched the Organization beyond its limits. However, very specific objectives have also emerged, and they have been consistently reaffirmed in this Organization. Respect for human rights, the right to life, a redefinition of what constitutes quality of life, a new appreciation of democracy and the numerous dimensions of freedom, the participation of civil society in decision-making, the contribution of non-governmental organizations, the intrinsic importance of women's situation and the needs of children are all part of a culture of peace.

In the meeting rooms of this Organization we proclaim with increasing urgency the pressing need for greater progress in the areas of conventional disarmament, non-proliferation, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the prohibition of nuclear testing. All these engines of destruction originated in developed countries, never in the poor countries. All of these products of the human mind are

challenges to the creation of a culture of peace and an education for peace.

But the aims and specific actions contained in the report and in the draft declaration and programme of action, which we have all studied, propose neither a political nor an onerous plan. They propose ideals, not illusions; but attainable ideals and actions that already exist. In essence, as set out under the heading "Aims and strategies," paragraph 2, a monitoring system is proposed, based on the catalytic role to be played by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, particularly through the Administrative Committee on Coordination. Specific measures are proposed, such as educational campaigns, school programmes and the use of school textbooks in which hatred will not be taught and history will not be distorted. Thus, is it fully possible in a special way to better develop education for the prevention of conflicts and the action of regional centres not only for the prevention of conflicts but also for the promotion of disarmament and peace.

The Gorée island memorial project in Senegal received very special mention in the statement of the representative of Bangladesh. We believe that project will be very dear to Peru, its culture and cultural interrelationships and all the bloodlines of the Peruvian nationality.

We believe that fostering reconciliation, including the ideal of forgiving and forgetting, is a part of all the ideas we are expressing here.

In our view, there are two very important points to consider at this session of the Assembly. The first is to have a clear awareness of the great possibility of developing a culture of peace and education for peace through the mass media. The second is to take action and take a decision during this session of the Assembly.

Finally, we believe that nothing could be more important or more relevant for the United Nations than to have this item inscribed on the agenda of the Millennium Assembly.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision taken earlier, I call on the Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): The unanimous decision of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session to proclaim the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace is a fitting beginning to a new millennium in which a culture of war and of violent solutions to conflicts may finally give way to a culture of peace. For this to become a reality, however, the peoples of the world must learn to live together on the basis of the universal values of peace.

Peace is far more than the absence of war and violence. Peace requires the establishment of social conditions in which the inherent dignity and the inalienable rights of all members of the human family are recognized. This, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is the very foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

In his historic encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII, in 1963, conceived of universal peace as resting on four pillars: truth, justice, liberty and a solidarity based on disinterested love for the other. In this brief statement, my delegation wishes to address one of these points, that of the relationship between truth and peace.

The truth of the human person is, in the first place, the inherent and inalienable dignity and worth of each and every person, without exception. Where there is no concrete expression of this fundamental truth, an authentic culture of peace is impossible. While discrimination on the basis of racial origin seems to have decreased in many parts of the world, more subtle forms of discrimination, related to ethnic or national origin or religious belief, continue to fuel harsh conflicts.

In his most recent encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II singled out the peaceful coexistence of different races and cultures as one of the most pressing issues facing humanity today, an issue that must be faced in a spirit of open dialogue and collaboration. The possibility of true peace is based on such a spirit.

It is possible to construct a renewed society and to solve the complex problems that the world faces today only upon the basis of the transcendent truth of the human person. In the political sphere, this includes overcoming all forms of totalitarianism, which, even after the fall of the Iron Curtain, continues to destroy the freedom of persons or groups. Totalitarianism, in any of its multiple forms, denies the dignity of each person, transforming persons and groups from the subjects of rights into objects to be used. There is, in fact, an inseparable connection between truth and freedom.

Everyone has a right, and indeed a duty, to contribute to the building of a just and peaceful society. This becomes impossible when certain minority groups are excluded because of national origin or religion. Nor is it sufficient that the presence of such diverse groups be simply tolerated. Their active participation in civil society must be promoted and assured.

Truth is also the necessary condition for the rebuilding of a society after violent struggles have set group against group, people against people. The very effort of former opponents to come together and seek a solution to conflict is a significant step towards peace.

In his message on the 1997 World Day of Peace, Pope John Paul II pointed out the necessity of adopting a new attitude in order to re-examine the past. We must learn to read the history of other peoples without bias, striving to understand the point of view of the other. Our very acceptance of the opportunity to reread this history together will make it easier to accept and appreciate the legitimate differences between individuals, groups and peoples.

Truth also means recognizing things for what they truly are: hatred is hatred, murder is murder and massacres are massacres. Political or ideological motives and manipulations cannot serve as an excuse not to recognize these things.

Truth also demands the fulfilment of the requirements of justice. Recently, there have been significant examples of efforts to establish the truth, and with it justice, regarding acts of violence, massacres, terrorism and even genocide. The long and painful process of reconciliation can begin only when the truth has been established. New seeds of conflict are sown when this truth is obscured or vengeance dominates.

Truth must also be the guiding principle in the transmission of information, be it through the media or in all levels of education. Violence flourishes in lies and actually needs lies to continue to rage. A distortion of the culture, identity and specificity of other persons or groups can foster attitudes that reject that which is different and build up a false sense of superiority, even of hatred and fear. Such attitudes are destructive of a culture of peace.

The media have a special responsibility to communicate what is happening in today's world with the greatest objectivity possible, and to reject sensationalism, which can actually heighten tensions and misunderstandings. The educator — and the first educator is the family — also has the responsibility to form young people, from their earliest age, to appreciate and understand the culture and history of other peoples and see in them a source of mutual enrichment.

The pursuit of truth is actually the quest for peace. To seek truth together is perhaps one of the most solid and stable foundations for it. As Pope John Paul II stated in *Fides et Ratio*,

> "To believe it possible to know a universally valid truth is no way to encourage intolerance; on the contrary, it is the essential condition for sincere and authentic dialogue between persons. On this basis alone is it possible to overcome divisions".

On the eve of the year 2000, the Holy See joins the family of nations in contributing to building a peace which, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, is aimed at developing friendly relations among nations, achieving international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural or humanitarian problems and harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of common ends. This is the foundation of the culture of peace so many people long for. It is the responsibility of all States and all peoples to find the political will and determination to realize that peace together.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.25, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.25?

Draft resolution A/53/L.25 was adopted (resolution 53/25).

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): It is regrettable that in today's discussion of such a lofty, far-reaching and universal goal as the promotion of the culture of peace, this Assembly was subjected to inappropriate and inaccurate remarks specifically directed against my country by the representatives of Lebanon and Syria. I would therefore like to take this opportunity, in keeping with the spirit of the present discussion on the culture of peace, to clarify my country's position with regard to the achievement of a peaceful resolution of the differences between Israel and Lebanon, which we hope will be attained at the earliest possible opportunity.

Let me assure my Lebanese colleague that Israel has no aspirations regarding Lebanon other than the achievement of peace. We have designs neither on Lebanese sovereign territory nor on its natural resources. Israel seeks only to establish a future of lasting and secure peace for ourselves and our children, as I hope Lebanon does also. Unfortunately, however, there are organizations operating within Lebanon that have used and continue to use Lebanese territory to launch indiscriminate terrorist attacks against Israel and its citizens — men, women and children alike.

Terrorist infiltrations and bombardments have caused loss of life and limb, extensive material damage and untold trauma to the schoolchildren of northern Israel. Those children must spend long hours, and sometimes many days, in concrete bomb shelters, huddled in fearful anticipation of the next mortar bomb or rocket salvo sent screeching over Israel's northern border to explode in the streets and houses above them. It is for their sake that it is incumbent upon both of us to redouble our efforts to inculcate and develop the culture of peace between us.

In order to further that objective, Israel has stated on many occasions that it stands ready to fully implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) within a framework that will ensure the implementation of all its elements, including its stated goals of restoring international peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority. However, until such satisfactory arrangements are made, Israel will have no choice but to exercise its right of self-defence in order to protect civilian lives from the terrorist aggression directed against it and emanating from Lebanese territory.

In the wake of the recent signing of the of the promising Wye River Memorandum between Israel and the Palestinians, and in the midst of this discussion of the culture of peace, now would be a most opportune time to call upon our Lebanese neighbours to engage in constructive discussions on the establishment of those necessary security arrangements in southern Lebanon as an important first step in the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and at the same time to re-engage in the direct peace negotiations on both the Lebanese track and the Syrian track — talks initiated in Madrid in October 1991, which, unfortunately, have been suspended for some time.

Regarding the negotiations, I would like to take this opportunity to remind my Syrian colleague that those ground-breaking talks were convened in Madrid on the basis of the Madrid invitation, which was accepted by all sides, including Israel and Syria. That document, which constitutes the foundation of the present Middle East peace process, clearly states that these negotiations are taking place on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Consequently, a statement to the effect that my Government has rejected resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and, for that matter, 425 (1978), is misleading, inaccurate and unfortunate.

We urge our Syrian neighbours to re-engage with us in these direct, bilateral peace negotiations on the basis of the agreed-upon Madrid formula, with no prior conditions, so that we may together achieve that peace which has evaded us for so long.

Mr. Najem (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am puzzled by the comments of the representative of the Israeli occupation forces. In my statement this morning, I referred to two clear issues. The first was Israel's theft of Lebanese territory — a fact that is officially acknowledged by the Israeli Government. Secondly, I referred to an incident that took place in April 1996, when the Israeli occupation forces bombarded Qana and killed 106 innocent civilians. At that time the Secretary-General dispatched an investigator to the area, Major-General Van Kappen, whose report can be studied in document S/1996/337. That document, like others, condemns the forces of the Israeli occupation.

With regard to the baseless claims of the representative of the Israeli occupation forces, I would like to say that our experience is that the occupation forces do not believe in laws, values or human rights. I will provide some facts — although they are not exhaustive — by way of example. The Israeli occupation forces deliberately perpetrated a horrible massacre in the town of Qana that claimed the lives of 106 innocent

civilians, including women, children and old men who, in the United Nations compound in the town, were taking refuge from the Israeli aggression called "Operation Grapes of Wrath", launched against civilians in the Lebanese town of Qana. This is the town in Galilee referred to in the New Testament, where Jesus Christ performed his first miracle by transforming water into wine. The holiness of that site means nothing to the occupation forces, which systematically seek to destroy our values, our civilization, and whatever is sacred to us. Furthermore, they violated the sanctity of the United Nations premises that house the messengers of peace.

Are those the values defended by the representative of the forces of occupation? By what logic did he want us not to mention the fact that the occupation forces brought life to a standstill in southern Lebanon through their repeated daily bombardment of peaceful villages, disrupting the course of daily life and closing schools down? The right to education, the right to security and the right to peace are among basic human rights. The occupation forces try to undermine such rights on a daily basis in southern Lebanon, but to no avail.

Israel, the occupying Power since 1972, rejects the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which demanded its immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Lebanon. Is the forcible acquisition of the territory of others also a human right? The forces of occupation have engaged in various forms of warfare against my country, at times by bombardment using all kinds of weapons, and at other times by invasion, in an attempt to impose their brand of peace and their terms upon Lebanon. They have not succeeded, nor will they ever succeed, for Lebanon will not tolerate Israeli occupation of its land. The peace in which Lebanon believes is peace based on resolutions of international legitimacy, especially Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and on the principle of land for peace.

There is another matter. We have heard the representative of the occupying Power attack honourable people who are fighting the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, branding them as "terrorists" because they resist and reject subjugation by the forces of Israeli occupation and cling to freedom and to the liberation of Lebanon from this villainy. Does the representative of the occupying Power think that the world is blind to its aggression with lethal weapons of devastation against Lebanon and its sovereignty, and to its criminal intentions, in violation of Lebanon's independence and sovereignty and stubbornly ignoring all resolutions of international legitimacy? What the representative of the occupying Power calls "terrorism" is in fact nothing less than valiant resistance against occupying armies. Resistance to foreign occupation is a legitimate right guaranteed by all norms of international law. This valiant resistance to occupation will continue unabated, parallel with the full range of diplomatic endeavours, until the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the forces of occupation from Lebanese territory to the internationally recognized boundaries.

As for the claim by the representative of the occupying Power that his State desires to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978), this is but one more lie in its attempts to mislead world public opinion and divert its attention from the crimes Israel perpetrates daily there. If the occupying Power truly wishes to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978), the sole way to that end is very clear: immediate, unconditional withdrawal to the internationally recognized boundaries, as stipulated in that resolution.

Israel's conditions for withdrawal constitute a blatant attempt to evade its obligations and to prolong its occupation, in line with its true intentions of expansion and aggression. Israel did not seek permission to occupy southern Lebanon; it should also depart without permission.

We had every right to speak of the suffering of our people under occupation by speaking of Israeli practices. Indeed, it is the duty of everyone in this international forum to know the facts and to be aware of the suffering of peoples. On the basis of the Charter and its provisions, and as our expression of confidence in the representatives of the world's States gathered in this Hall, whom we have known to reject categorically the practices and the brutality of occupation, my delegation exercised its right to make clear the true suffering of its people, no more and no less.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic was not surprised by the Israeli delegation's response to our statement, in which, like all other delegations, we spoke of the meaning of peace and of a culture of peace. This is because neither the Israeli delegation nor the Government of Israel believes in peace or in a culture of peace. We believe that the most dangerous enemies of a

culture of peace are those who pretend that they believe in a culture of peace while actually murdering that culture.

How much would I have liked to be able to speak today about the establishment of a just peace in the Middle East, about respect for and the implementation of United Nations resolutions on the Middle East, about the success of the Madrid peace process. But unfortunately, the region still stands on the brink of disaster because the present Israeli Government has reneged on its commitment to the bases of peace and to the peace process, has refused to implement United Nations resolutions and has defaulted on agreements concluded in the context of the Madrid peace process.

The millions of displaced persons, the tears of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian children in the occupied Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian territories, and the suffering of our peoples as a result of Israeli occupation all call out to the conscience of the world to support the peace process and to apply the culture and the principles of peace. But international efforts have invariably collided with Israeli policies rejecting withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the establishment of a comprehensive, just peace in the Middle East, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and on the principle of land for peace. That was the basis on which the Madrid Conference on peace in the Middle East was convened.

More than one delegation has said today that it would be a grave mistake to view a culture of peace as nothing but rhetoric. All speakers have called upon States to commit themselves to a culture of peace, and especially to the implementation of its principles — in particular, tackling the root causes of the problems that lead to war and violence. Is there any greater threat to a culture of peace than the occupation of the lands of others for more than 30 years, or the displacement of millions of women, children and old people — which is what Israel has perpetrated? Is there a greater threat to peace and a culture of peace than Israel's continued murder of Arabs and the build-up of its devastating military arsenal and capabilities, including nuclear weapons, or its rejection of declaring the region of the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone, or its establishment of settlements throughout the occupied Arab territories — even after the signing of the most recent agreement?

Do the claims of the Israeli delegation embody a culture of peace? Or do those claims really reflect culture of war and the murder of the culture of peace?

Syria opened the way to the Madrid peace process. After long and strenuous negotiations, peace was not far away. But the Israeli Government continues to this day to reject the resumption of the talks at the point at which they were suspended. That is why the negotiations have been stalled for more than two and a half years.

Syria affirms the need to resume negotiations from the point where they stopped, in a manner that would guarantee the legitimate and inalienable rights of Arabs to their territories and establish an honourable, just and comprehensive peace.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): I believe it is clear to all members of the General Assembly that disagreements exist between Israel and Lebanon and Israel and Syria. Yet we do have an agreed framework to work out our differences, the Madrid framework. The Madrid Conference was convened in October 1991 and we were able to begin negotiations between us. Let us return to those negotiations without prior conditions. We can work out our differences.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic): As the Assembly can see, my delegation is not trying to prolong this dialogue, but we would like to put before everyone the truth and only the truth as it actually is. We believe in the principles of the Madrid peace process and in the bases from which it proceeded. We emphasize all the obligations and commitments made in the context of the peace process. But it is the current Israeli Government that is placing conditions on the resumption of the peace process, because it wants to go back to square one in the talks, and to eliminate all the achievements and agreements concluded during that difficult period that lasted for over two years.

We would like to affirm before the Assembly that Syria is ready to restart the peace process immediately from where it left off, and not on any basis that would steer the process away from its genuine objective and the achievements it has already made. Any statements to the contrary are but lies and baseless allegations that do not serve the cause of the peace process.

Mr. Najem (Lebanon): We must reply once again to the representative of the occupying Power, Israel.

Resolution 425 (1978) is clear in both its content and its provisions. What the occupying forces need to do is to apply them, since the resolution calls for Israel's

immediate withdrawal from all occupied Lebanese territories.

As for all the other tracks, my delegation and my Government have declared that we are ready to resume negotiations from where they ended. However, we see that Israel did not respect its commitments under the Madrid peace process, which began in 1991. Israel also did not respect Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) or the land-for-peace formula.

We have expressed our readiness for peace and for the resumption of negotiations from where they left off. This is very clear and axiomatic. I only wanted to clarify what was said by the representative of the occupying Power.

The Acting President: I should now like to remind members that, as stated by the representative of Bangladesh at this morning's meeting, an additional draft resolution containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace will be submitted at a later date.

I would also like to congratulate Member States on the adoption of the very important resolution entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)". History will record that this is perhaps the single most important decision the international community took in securing international peace, cooperation and development for future generations. It represents a cultivation of this new culture of peace at all levels of education, through all channels of communication and involving all segments of society.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 31.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.